

"My first school nurse job was in Torquay, where I was possibly the only male school nurse in the south of England!"

Discover how Philip switched careers to work as a nurse.

Philip Wells

Lead professional school nursing/practice teacher

Phillip left the RAF to start a career in nursing. Over the years, he practiced different branches of nursing and then discovered his passion as a school nurse.



What led you to nursing?

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I decided to leave the RAF in 1992 and becoming a nurse was a natural progression. I liked the idea of being able to try different branches of nursing once I qualified.

How did you become a nurse?

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I qualified in adult nursing at the University of Exeter, and then worked at Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton in the medical unit, specialising in cardiology, diabetes and gastroenterology. I then did a specialist community public health nursing degree at the University of Plymouth.

How did your school nursing career start?

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My first school nurse job was in Torquay, where I was possibly the only male school nurse in the south of England! I worked there for two school years, developing my skills in teaching, setting up and running school-based clinics and fulfilling the wider public health role of the school nurse, such as the vaccination programmes.

During this time, I also completed my practice teacher qualification which enabled me to mentor other school nurse degree students.

In 2002, I took a school nurse post back in Somerset and a year later became the team leader. I also became the first male in the county at that time to have completed the family planning qualification.

How has your role developed?

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There were many changes in community services during my first few years in Somerset, and my colleagues and I developed a standardised school nurse role across the county, eventually amalgamating services from four primary care ^[1] trusts into one organisation.

In Somerset, we run drop-in clinics in most secondary schools which provide a confidential service to address any physical and emotional needs young people may have such as sexual or emotional health and well-being issues.

What's the best part of your job?

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I'm proud that school nursing has an important and recognised role in meeting the emotional and physical needs of children and young people.

Young people get a lot of negative press, but they never fail to impress and inspire me with their resilience and creativity. They definitely keep me on my toes! Working with children and young people means no two days are ever the same.

Guide

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[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Primary_care [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/we-are-the-nhs/registration?career=nursing-guide>